

Questions and Answers

Services for Children with Disabilities Placed by Their Parents in Private and Religious Schools

(REVISED 3-5-10)

DCPS PRIVATE AND RELIGIOUS OFFICE (PRO)

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District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) is responsible for Child Find activities which include locating, identifying, and evaluating all students with disabilities who are enrolled by their parents in private or religious schools in the District of Columbia. This includes children who do not live in the District and whose parents have enrolled them in private schools in the District.

The DCPS Private and Religious Office (PRO) manages referrals for parentally placed private school students ages 5 to 21. To begin the referral process parents must register their child as non-attending and complete a referral packet. Referral forms are available at the DCPS Private and Religious Office (PRO), private and religious schools in the District, five DCPS cluster schools, and the PRO website.

1. What is Child Find?

Child Find refers to the active and continuing efforts of the school division to identify, locate, and evaluate any child, birth to 21 years inclusive, who resides within the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia and is thought to be a child with a disability. This includes resident children who do not attend public school, but attend private schools in the District of Columbia. It also includes non-resident children whose parents place them in private schools in the District of Columbia.

2. How can private schools and parents obtain information regarding the special education and related services that may be available for their students with disabilities?

General information for parents who place their children with disabilities in private schools is available through the DCPS Private and Religious Office. The web- site for the Private and Religious office is <http://www.k12.dc.us/pro>

3. What can parents of private school students do when they believe a student needs special education assistance?

Parents must first register their child as a non-attending student at the Private-Religious Office (PRO) or the appropriate cluster school. After registering, the parent must submit a completed referral form. Referral forms are available at the previously identified sites as well as at the PRO website and at D.C. private and religious schools. For students who reside in the District of Columbia, PRO will send the completed and signed referral packet to the child's neighborhood school. For private school students who do not reside in the District of Columbia, PRO will send the packet to the neighborhood school nearest to the private-religious school.

4. Where do private and religious students receive evaluations and services?

Once DCPS PRO submits the completed referral packet to the student's school, all screening and any provision of special education services will take place at the student's neighborhood D.C public school. For private school students who do not reside in the District of Columbia, the neighborhood school is the D.C. public school nearest to the student's private-religious school. Parents may contact the Private and Religious Office if the child's neighborhood school is not known.

5. How long does it take to find a student eligible for special education services?

Once a DCPS school receives a student referral, the neighborhood school must convene a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meeting to determine whether or not the student needs to be evaluated for special education. If they determine that assessments are required, the school will complete the assessments and hold an eligibility meeting. The time period for this entire process must not exceed 120 days from the date of the signed consent.

6. Can consent for evaluations be withdrawn before testing is completed and restarted at a later date?

Consent for evaluations may be withdrawn but the school system will retain a file of any testing completed up to the point of the withdrawal. A parent may make a referral to restart the testing at any time in the future. The Local Multi-Disciplinary Team will review the referral and determine whether testing is warranted.

7. Will public school staff be sent to the private school to do the screening? Can the speech and language clinician be sent to the private school?

Screenings and speech/language services will be provided within a DCPS school. This is necessary due to the number of schools, the available resources, and the time required to serve students. On-call observations and teacher interviews will be available.

8. What services are available to a private-religious school student with disabilities?

After evaluations are completed, an MDT/IEP meeting is held at the neighborhood school to determine eligibility. If the student is found eligible for special education, he/she will be offered placement at the neighborhood school with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). If the parent declines the placement and chooses to have the student remain at the private-religious school the student may be eligible for an Individualized Services Plan (ISP) if the services are appropriate for the student's needs. If the eligible student is not a resident of DC, he/she will be offered an ISP if appropriate. If the parent prefers an IEP he/she will need to take the documents to the county of residence for further assistance.

9. What is the difference between an IEP (Individualized Education Program) and an ISP (Individualized Services Plan)?

The IEP is a written statement that specifies the individual needs of the child and what special education and related services are necessary to meet those needs. The services are provided through the public schools. The ISP indicates the service(s) the student may receive when the student attends a parentally-placed private school. A student with an ISP may receive the following

services: speech/language services once a week and occupational therapy consultations twice a year.

10. Can a student receive the same amount of special education service through an ISP as he or she would receive through an IEP?

A parentally-placed private school student with a disability is not entitled to receive some or all of the special education and related services that the student would receive if enrolled in a public school. The services DCPS offers in an ISP were established in the Statement of Services Agreement. [See page 4 of this document for Statement of Services Agreement].

11. What services are available to parentally placed private school bi-lingual students with a disability?

If the student has been found eligible for special education services, he/she will be offered placement at the neighborhood school with an IEP. If the parent declines the placement and chooses to have the student remain at the private-religious school the student may be eligible for an ISP.

12. If a private school student is determined to be eligible for special education services and the parent rejects services offered through an IEP, what is the process if the parent later requests support?

For resident students, the parents would make a request for services by contacting the neighborhood school. The IEP/ISP team would convene to determine whether updated information is needed and what, if any, services the student would receive. If the parent chooses to enroll his/her child in the public school, the IEP will be implemented at the neighborhood school. If the parent decides to have the student continue at the private school, an ISP may be offered if the services in an ISP are appropriate for the student's needs. ISP services are outlined in the Statement of Services Agreement. **[See page 4 of this document for Statement of Services Agreement].**

For non-resident students attending a private-religious school located within the District of Columbia, the parents would contact the D.C. public school closest to the private school and request an ISP meeting. If the parent wants an IEP for the student, he/she would contact the school district in his or her county of residence.

13. Who is responsible for conducting the reevaluation and managing special education services for a parentally placed private school student with an ISP?

The reevaluation should take place in the school where the student is receiving special education services. The school providing services manages the student's ISP.

District of Columbia Public Schools, Office of Special Education Statement of Services Agreement For Private-Religious Schools

Historical Perspective

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) wants to ensure that all students with disabilities receive special education services, including students attending private-religious schools. A team consisting of representatives from the DCPS Office of Special Education and private-religious schools was formed in the spring of 2003. The team met on five separate occasions to work together in developing the Statement of Services Agreement as well as the Procedures for Parentally Placed Students Enrolled in Private-Religious Schools.

On October 22, 2003, the DC Public Schools and the Private-Religious Team members held their first conference. The Private-Religious Team members presented THE STATEMENT OF SERVICES AGREEMENT, as well as the procedures, to the DCPS and the private-religious schools representatives and requested their comments.

Through teamwork a Statement of Services Agreement for the District of Columbia Schools, Office of Special Education and Private-Religious Schools has been developed.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was reauthorized in 2004. The provisions of the new law went into effect July 1, 2005. The Private-Religious Steering Committee met in the spring of 2005 to review and align the agreement with IDEIA 2004. The revised language in the law states: "Each Local Education Agency (LEA) must provide services to parentally-placed private school children with disabilities who attend private schools located in the LEA without regard to where the children reside." The Private-Religious Steering Committee worked collaboratively to modify the provisions of the agreement. With team effort, the Statement of Services Agreement has been revised to comply with the changes in the law.

Statement of Services (Revision)

This document outlines the special education services based on the reauthorization of IDEIA, to be provided by the District of Columbia Public Schools, Office of Special Education (DCPS) for students enrolled in private-religious schools. This applies only to students who are residents of the District of Columbia and/or students who live in other jurisdictions who attend private or religious schools in the District of Columbia. Students meeting these criteria are enrolled by their families or guardians and the tuition is funded by sources other than the DC Public Schools.

DCPS will provide services as outlined below:

1. DCPS will engage in Child Find activities in locating, identifying, and evaluating children who are legal residents residing in the District of Columbia, or wards of the District, and students who live in other jurisdictions who attend private or religious schools in the District of Columbia. DCPS will send a copy of the Agreement, information request form and brochure to each private-religious school. Child Find activities for parentally placed private-religious school students will take place at the C.A.R.E. Center located at Shaw JHS, which officially opened July 1, 2004.

2. DCPS will collect Child Count data to give an accurate account on the number of students enrolled in private-religious schools in the District of Columbia, to determine the number of children with disabilities who are parentally placed in private and religious schools that:

- Seek to obtain a DCPS evaluation for special education
- Qualify as having a disability
- Receive services under IDEIA

3. DCPS will provide screenings, assessments and multi-disciplinary meetings as determined by the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) to all referred students between the ages of 3-22 within the timeline of 120 days, which is comparable to that for the public school students, as long as the students are either residents or wards of the District of Columbia or students who are residents of other jurisdictions who attend private-religious schools in the District of Columbia.

4. DCPS will provide the following service only for students attending private and religious schools in the District of Columbia:

4a. Per the agreement, DCPS has designated a liaison for private-religious schools.

4b. **Speech and language services** will be offered to eligible students, not to exceed one (1) hour per week. Services will be provided at identified schools within the District of Columbia.

4c. **Consultative Occupational Therapy** will be provided for eligible students for no more than (2) school-based consultations per school year. The Occupational Therapist will also be available by phone if necessary.

5. The delivery of services will be determined with flexibility to best serve each eligible student by determining how, where, and by whom special education services will be provided.

Considerations include, but are not limited to:

- Services provided at the private-religious schools;
- Services provided at DCPS neighborhood schools;
- Negotiations with individual schools to develop a creative delivery service system.

6. A Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) will be offered to eligible students and an IEP will be developed. If parents decide to continue enrollment in the private-religious schools, Individual Service Plans (ISP) will be developed only for services specified in the agreement.

7. The amount spent on special education services for private and religious school children will be proportionate to the amount of federal funds available consistent with IDEIA.

8. DCPS will maintain and provide data as requested to private and religious schools consistent with IDEIA.

9. DCPS and the private-religious schools will maintain an ongoing dialogue related to the implementation of this agreement through designated liaison representatives.

10. The private-religious schools agree to work together with DCPS to advise all appropriate faculty, administrators, staff and parents of the availability of service and the procedures for obtaining these

services. DCPS will inform all DCPS principals, administrators, and local school staff.

11.DCPS will hold an annual conference with input from representatives from private-religious schools.

12.Any service that is not explicitly delineated above is not provided by DCPS to private and religious school students under this agreement.

13.This agreement does not apply to students whose parents have chosen to home-school their children.

Revised March 5, 2010